Siena, Italy, Zurcher Kantonalbank, Switzerland and Banche Popolari United S.c.r.l., Italy for their maiden presence by opening a Representative Office in India, during the last one year.

Besides, applications have also been received from UBS AG, Switzerland, United Overseas Bank Ltd., Singapore, Banca Popolare di Vicenza, Italy, Landesbank Hessen-Thuringen Girozentrale Germany and Svenska Handelsbanken AB, Sweden for maiden presence/ upgradation in India.

(c) Any foreign bank desirous of having presence in India needs to fulfill, *inter-alia,* the following terms and conditions:

- Obtaining licence under section 22 of Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and for branch expansion needs licence under Section 23 of the said Act.
- Lending to priority sector by the foreign banks shall be 32 % of their Net Bank Credit (NBC). Within this overall target of 32%, the advances to small scale industries sector should not be less than 10% of their NBC and the export credit should not be. less than 12% of the NBC.
- To comply with the directives and other guidelines on maintenance of CRR/SLR, Capital adequacy, prudential norms on income recognition, asset classification, provisioning for bad and doubtful debts, transparency in Balance Sheet, acquisition of immovable properties in India, engagement of ex-patriates and deployment of foreign funds in Indian business etc.

(d) and (e) The large number of proposals from foreign entities evincing interest do not indicate that there are any issues inhibiting banking operation in India by foreign entities.

Indirect Tax Rate

2274. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country has the highest indirect tax rate;

(b) if so, the details thereof, sector-wise; and

(c) whether Government propose to launch schemes for poor people by which they have to pay less indirect taxes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Indirect tax rates of other

countries are not maintained by the Government, and therefore, it is not possible to comment on whether indirect tax rates in India are the highest.

(c) Indirect taxes are paid by the manufacturers or service providers and ultimately borne by the consumer. It is not possible to prescribe schemes which will lesson the tax burden exclusively on the poor people. However, Small Scale/tiny units having annual turnover of Rs.4 crore can avail excise duty exemption on first clearance of Rs. one crore under SSI Exemption Scheme and in case of small scale service tax provider, there is threshold limit of Rs.4 lakh for service tax exemption.

Non-spending of budget allocation by ministries

2275. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per the latest figures available with Comptroller General of Accounts (CGA), many Ministries have not spend the budget allocated to them in the Plan expenditure for the year 2005-06; and

(b) if so, the action Government propose to take to encourage the Ministries to spend the entire amount of allocated funds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) Against the provision of Rs. 1,43,497 crore for Plan expenditure in BE 2005-06, the actual expenditure by all Ministries/Departments of Central Government upto January, 2006 is Rs. 1,01,356 crore, which works out to 71 % of provision made in BE 2005-06. The Comparative position upto January 2005 was Rs.89,147 crore which was 61% of BE 2004-05. As the current financial year 2005-06 is yet to be completed, it is early to draw any conclusion from the pace of expenditure upto January, 2006. The trends in the Central Government finances are closely monitored and appropriate measures are taken in the light of emerging trends as and when necessary.

Withdrawal of guarantee on LIC policies

2276. SHRIS. S.AHLUWALIA:
SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the private life insurance sector has complained to IRDA that Government guarantee on more than 16 crore policies sold by LIC has created a bias for LIC policies among the public;